

REMARKS

Applicant is in receipt of the Office Action mailed March 29, 2004. Claims 14, 15, 18, and 20 have been cancelled. Claims 1, 16, 17, 19, 21, 26, and 38-44 have been amended. New claims 45-50 have been added. Applicant earnestly requests reconsideration of the present case in light of the following remarks.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Office Action objected to claims 11-13, 15-18, 20 and 21, as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant appreciates the allowed subject matter, but believes that the claims as currently presented are patentably distinct over the cited art.

However, in order to expedite prosecution, Applicant has amended the independent claims and added new claims to capture the allowed subject matter. More specifically, Applicant has amended claims 1, 26, and 38-44 to include the limitations of claims 14 and 15, and has cancelled claims 14 and 15 and updated the dependencies of claims 16 and 17, accordingly. Claim 18 was in contradiction of amended claim 1, and so was cancelled. Claim 19 was amended to include the limitation of claim 20 for consonance with amended claim 1, and claim 20 cancelled. Claim 21 was amended to update its dependency. New independent claim 45 includes the limitations of original claims 1 and 11, and new claims 46 and 47, dependent therefrom, include the limitations of original claims 12 and 13. New independent claim 48 includes the limitations of original claims 1, 14, and 18. New independent claim 49 includes the limitations of original claims 1, 19, and 20, and new claim 50, dependent therefrom, includes the limitations of original claim 21. Applicant respectfully submits that no new matter has been added to the claims, and so the amendments do not raise any new issues.

Applicant will file a continuation application to more fully and completely claim Applicant's invention.

Section 102 Rejections

Claims 1, 3-10, 14, 19, 26-35, 38, 39, 43, and 44 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Hibbard (U.S. 6,249,594, "Hibbard"). Claim 40 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Nakajima et al. (U.S. 5,915,034, "Nakajima"). Claim 41 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Nishiya et al. (U.S. 5,109,431, "Nakajima"). Claim 42 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Gross et al. (U.S. 6,240,372, "Gross").

As noted above, Applicant has amended the claims to include the allowed subject matter, and so respectfully submits that independent claims 1, 26, and 38-44, and those claims respectively dependent thereon, are patentably distinct and non-obvious over the cited art, and are thus allowable. Removal of the 102 rejection of claims 1, 3-10, 14, 19, 26-35, 38-44 is earnestly requested.

Section 103 Rejections

The Office Action rejected claims 2, 22-25, 36, and 37 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hibbard. Applicant submits that since amended independent claims 1 and 26 have been shown to be patentably distinct over Hibbard, respective dependent claims 2 and 22-25, and 36-37 are similarly patentably distinct over Hibbard, and are thus allowable for at least the reasons provided above.

Removal of the 103 rejection of claims 2, 22-25, 36, and 37 is respectfully requested.

Applicant also asserts that numerous ones of the dependent claims recite further distinctions over the cited art. However, since the independent claims have been shown to be patentably distinct, a further discussion of the dependent claims is not necessary at this time.

CONCLUSION

Applicant submits the application is in condition for allowance, and an early notice to that effect is requested.

If any extensions of time (under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136) are necessary to prevent the above referenced application(s) from becoming abandoned, Applicant(s) hereby petition for such extensions. If any fees are due, the Commissioner is authorized to charge said fees to Meyertons, Hood, Kivlin, Kowert & Goetzel PC Deposit Account No. 50-1505/5150-51800/JCH.

Also enclosed herewith are the following items:

- ☒ Return Receipt Postcard
- ☐ Request for Approval of Drawing Changes
- ☐ Check in the amount of \$ for fees ().
- ☐ Other:

Respectfully submitted,



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